

Remarks at a Reception Honoring Senator Dianne Feinstein in
San Francisco, California
November 20, 1993

Thank you very much, William Lewis Brown, Junior. *[Laughter]* I love San Francisco. Willie Brown gets called by his full name, and Clarence Clemmons replaces the Marine Band.

You know, I once told Dianne Feinstein I would do anything legal I could for California. It turned out that that included replacing her at her own fundraiser. You wonder how I get those one-vote margins—no chore is too large or small for the President to perform. *[Laughter]* Dianne throws a party for 750 people, Dick doesn't even come to the airport to meet me, and I show up here to speak anyway. *[Laughter]*

It reminds me, you know, the last time I was in California a few weeks ago, I went down to L.A., and I had been through an interesting period of humbling, as I periodically experience. I mean, first, Al Gore goes on the Letterman show and is a smash hit, smashing his little ashtray and proving that we're going to reinvent Government, and he becomes a media star. I get beat up in the news; he has fun on Letterman. *[Laughter]* Then Hillary goes before the Senate and answers questions for 5 days without notes, and there's a poll in USA Today saying that 40 percent of the American people think she's smarter than I am. They asked me what I thought about it. I said what I thought was I couldn't understand how the other 60 percent missed it. *[Laughter]*

But then they told me I had a trip to California. I have such a wonderful time when I come out here. And I thought, well, I'll go out there, and they'll make me feel like a real President again. So I went to L.A., and they said I was going to stay in the Beverly Hilton Hotel. And Merv Griffin owns it, and I said, "It will be great. I'll bet Merv Griffin will be there to meet me there, and I'll feel really important. And they'll give me a nice room, and I'll have a great view of that beautiful golf course that's across the street from the hotel." That all happened. But here's what else happened—so help me, this is not made up. I get there, and I'm spruced up, because there's Merv Griffin all dolled up, and shakes hands, says, "How are you? I'm glad you're here at my hotel. I got you a wonderful suite upstairs. There is one

permanent resident on the floor where you'll be staying, and I thought it was appropriate for you to be there with him." I mean, it's Los Angeles; I was thrilled; my mind was going crazy, right? I get on the elevator; I get up to the umpty-dump floor, whatever it was; the elevator opens, and there holding a dozen roses for me is Rodney Dangerfield. It's true. He gives me a dozen of something called jungle roses with "a little respect" on the card. *[Laughter]*

Well, I am glad to be back. Senator Feinstein really is coming home. They worked late, hard, and well tonight in the United State Senate, not only passing 2 days early the trade agreement but also passing at long last the Brady bill.

I've found a lot of things to like and admire about Dianne Feinstein, even when she's wearing me out. That's one of the things I admire about her. I called her one night, and I said, "Nobody wears me out as effectively as you do." She's always got a new idea about something that will help this State. But I was never more proud of her than I was the other day when she called and she said, "You're for that assault weapons ban, aren't you?" And I said, "You know I am." She said, "Well, we've got to try to put it on the bill, and I want you to help me, and here's who I want you to call." So I said, "Okay, I'll do it." And she said, "If you call one person, it will be all over the Senate, and they'll know that you're not kidding about it." So then she got into this interchange which you probably remember with a Senator of the other party that said that—the implication was if she weren't a woman and if she weren't from California, she might know something about handguns. And she blistered him about what she knew about handguns and weapons generally. I want to tell you, it was a sweet moment in a town full of sanctimony to see another hot air balloon burst. *[Laughter]*

Sometimes I feel like I'm in a time warp. We live in a wonderful country, but there are a lot of kids in trouble. And you've got streets where the gang members are better armed than the policemen, and innocent people are getting

shot in the crossfire. And the time before last when I was out here in California, I was in Sacramento, as I remember, to do a town meeting. And there were people connected in towns all over the State. And this one young man said he was changing the school he was in because he and his brother didn't want to be in gangs; they didn't want to own guns; they didn't want to be in trouble; they didn't want to do drugs. They just wanted to get a good education; they wanted to go to college; they wanted to make a good life for themselves. So they changed schools to go to a safer school. And he and his brother were standing in line registering, and his brother got shot down in the line registering for school, in the school building.

And that could happen everywhere. And yet, you listen to these debates on the crime bill, the kind of things we're trying to do, and it sounds like some people are just literally in another world. Well, I've got to give the Senate and the House credit: They passed the Brady bill. They passed a crime bill that will give the cities of our country the actual means to reduce the crime rate. Don't let anybody kid you that more police officers properly deployed won't reduce the crime rate, not just catch criminals but reduce the crime rate. There is no question that it will work.

My friend Bob Lanier, the Governor of Houston, Texas, just got reelected with 91 percent of the vote because he told the people if they'd vote for him he would, through new people and overtime, put the equivalent of another 655 police officers on the street, he would deploy them properly, they'd have community policing, and the crime rate would go down. He did it, and the crime rate went down 17 percent in one year. And the people sent him back to the Mayor's office.

This will make a difference, this crime bill. But it makes a difference also that there are boot camps as opposed to prisons for youthful offenders, to give them a chance to do something constructive with their lives. And it makes a difference that the Brady bill passed. And it makes a difference that Dianne's amendment got on the Senate version of the bill. And when it goes to conference, I hope to goodness we can keep it the whole way.

I want you to know that because you have two highly unusual, very gifted first-year United States Senators in Dianne Feinstein and Barbara

Boxer, who have both made a profound impact on the politics of this country, and I am in their debt because, as Willie said, you know, I've had a few votes up there that weren't land-slides. *[Laughter]* Every time Al Gore and I are together, he sits up and looks at a crowd and says, "You know what the difference in me and other people in the Federal Government are? When I vote in the United States Senate, I'm always on the winning side." You have to think about that. When he said that, I knew he could beat Ross Perot in that debate. *[Laughter]*

It has been, as Willie said, an eventful 10 months. And with the help of the person you're here to honor tonight, we made a good beginning at turning the conditions around that have caused our country and this State so much grief. The United States Congress passed the largest deficit reduction package in history that gave us historically low interest rates, kept inflation down, enabled literally millions and millions of Americans to refinance their homes, and helped to produce more jobs in the private sector in the first 10 months of this administration than in the previous 4 years. Do we need more jobs? You bet we do, but that's a pretty good beginning.

That budget bill had an expanded earned-income tax credit—which is a long phrase now unfamiliar to Americans, but on April 15th it will become much more familiar—which does the most important job that we have done in our Tax Code in 20 years in rewarding work. For it says to all those lower income working people who have been working harder for less for two decades and who have children in their homes, we will reward your work. If you are at or near the poverty line, we will lift you up if you are willing to work and raise your children. We will not punish you for the decision to labor on and make the best you can of your life. It is profoundly significant and the biggest incentive for people to move from welfare to work that has been adopted in my lifetime. It will affect 14 million working families and almost 50 million Americans in those families when it becomes law, when the next tax returns are filed.

This tax bill also gave the high-tech community in northern California and throughout the country what they have been asking for for years: a capital gains treatment for long-term investments in new and small business; an ex-

pansion of the research and development tax credit; and by the way, a radical—yes, you can clap for that, that’s all right. *[Applause]* And something that almost nobody knows, it also radically reorganized the student loan program to keep one of the real commitments I made in the Presidential campaign of 1992, to open the doors of college education to all Americans. Because now, under this law, the interest rates on college loans will be lowered. The terms for repayment will be lengthened. Young people who choose to be public school teachers or do other public service work will be able to pay those loans back no matter how much they borrow as a percentage of their income. It will be tougher for people to evade repaying the loans, but they’ll be much, much easier to repay.

The Congress also passed a national service law which 3 years from now will permit 100,000 young Americans—8 times as many as ever served in one year in the Peace Corps—100,000 to work in a domestic peace corps to rebuild this country from the grassroots up and earn credit against a college education for doing it.

This Congress also passed and I signed the family and medical leave law, which gives people the right to have time off from their jobs. You know, sometimes when you’re in Washington, you’re always answering questions about process and who’s up and who’s down and who’s in and who’s out, what does this vote mean, and what do you have to say about what this politician said about you. And sometimes you just forget all about the human impact of what you do or don’t do.

About a month ago, on Sunday morning I came in from my morning jog, and I looked in the ground floor of the White House, and one of my young staffers was taking a family around on a tour, which is very unusual on Sunday morning. There was a man and his wife and three children. One of the children was in a wheelchair. And it was one of these Make-A-Wish Foundation families, you know; the child was very ill, and her wish was to come to the White House and see the President. So I went over and shook hands with them and asked if they would excuse me. I told them I’d go up and get cleaned up and try to look like the President again, and we’d take a picture. And I came down in a few minutes, and we took the picture. And I was going about my business, and the man grabbed me by the arm and turned around, and he said, “Let me tell you some-

thing, Mr. President, just in case you think what you do here doesn’t matter. My little girl is really sick, and she’s probably not going to make it. And because of that family leave law, I’ve been able to take some time off from my job and spend some time with my child. It’s the most important time I’ve ever had in my life. And if that law hadn’t passed, I would have had to choose between spending this time with this child or staying at my job and supporting the two children who are going to make it in my family. And I didn’t have to make that choice. Don’t you ever think what you do up here doesn’t make a difference.”

I tell you that because sometimes when you come to dinners like this, it is easy to forget. You say, “Well, my friends are doing this, and I like Dianne, and I’m here for this.” You are also here for larger purposes. And we have established together a record we can be proud of. But there is still much to be done. Still in process but not resolved are the crime bill, the Brady bill—because the House and the Senate passed two different versions, they have to be resolved—the campaign finance reform bill, the lobby reform bill, and the legislation to finally, at long last, provide health care security to all Americans. We have a lot to do, and it matters whether this Senator is reelected to the United States Senate.

I also want you to know it matters because of what we are trying to do for this country that specifically affects California. As I said, Senator Feinstein and Senator Boxer constantly are giving me their laundry lists of things that they think that this Government can do to help this State. And almost always it’s also very, very good for the whole country.

We have removed from export controls \$35 billion worth of high-tech equipment, computers, supercomputers, telecommunications equipment, thanks to the relentless work of the Secretary of Commerce, Ron Brown, who is here with me tonight. And California will benefit from that. *[Applause]* Stand up.

We’ve transferred 200 acres, or I have directed it—we have to work out the details—from Alameda Air Station to the Port of Oakland. We are cutting through redtape so that the dredging of the port can start 8 months earlier than it otherwise would have. And the most exciting thing to me is our technology reinvestment project where we’re putting up for competition limited Federal dollars to match

with private funds for defense contractors to come up with things that can be done in a post-cold-war economy to create the high-tech jobs of the future.

In the last round, the first of three rounds of projects, California got almost 25 percent of the projects fair and square through a completely competitive bidding process. And why not? That's why your unemployment rate is so high now, because you had such a high percentage of reliance on defense. You should have a high percentage of reward for conversion from a defense to a domestic economy. And we're going to do more of those things—[*applause*—the Congress believes it.

Ultimately, however, the economy of this State cannot recover unless the economy of America recovers and moves toward a high-tech, high-wage, highly competitive future and one in which all of our children are taken along instead of so many being left behind.

I ran for President because I thought there were two great problems in this country we had to address: One was to try to bring the economy back. The other was to try to bring the American people together, to make a strength out of our diversity, and to stop leaving so many of our children behind. We have made a good beginning on that.

One of the reasons I fought so hard for the highly controversial trade agreement with Mexico and Canada is that I have studied relentlessly for years the job-creating figures and the unemployment figures of every State in this country and every major advanced industrial nation in the world. Every rich country is having trouble creating jobs. Productivity, which is important to compete, is not leading to the creation of new jobs in much of the world today because productivity means fewer people can produce more things. And therefore, if fewer people produce more things, unemployment will stay high and wages will stay flat unless there are more customers for those things, which means we must have higher rates of growth in the world economy, and the United States must have more customers. There is no other way for us ultimately to grow this economy. We have to have a higher rate of growth and more customers. The trade agreement means more customers. The meeting I had today with the leaders of those 13 other Pacific nations means higher rates of growth and more customers if we do what we're supposed to do. That is what we must be about.

But that also will not work unless we are willing, my fellow Americans, to take up the hard work of healing the wounds of the last 10 and 20 and 30 years here at home. The whole practice of rearing children has been under assault for three decades in America. Middle class wages have been under assault for two decades here in this country, and more and more working people are actually poor. And for a very long time we have followed an economic theory that said if we made our country more unequal and ran the debt up, somehow it would all work out, regardless if whether we invested in the growth of this economy or not.

It is time to address those things. The crime bill is a beginning. The earned-income tax credit is a beginning. We are making beginnings. Trying to deal with health care and giving Americans health care security, whether they've got a job or not, whether they've been sick or not, is a beginning. Every disabled person in America, every person who is now HIV positive but healthy enough to work in America, every person in this country with a small business will be advantaged if we can finally join the ranks of every other country in the world and give affordable health care to all of our people. It is also positive economics.

I met just this week, as you know, with the Prime Minister of Japan, with the Prime Minister of Canada, with the leaders of a lot of other countries. And they said, "How much money do you spend on health care?" I said, "Fifteen percent of our income." They said, "What? And how many people do you have insured?" I said, "Thirty-seven million." They said, "What?" And I said, "You know what, nobody believes we can fix it. Every time I say we're going to fix it by doing what other people have done that worked, they say, 'Oh, it's going to cost more money.'" And they say, "What?" [*Laughter*]

I'm telling you, folks, we have got to fix this. We can't go on spending a dime on the dollar more than any other country in the world does on paperwork in our health care system and expect to do anything but be punished for it economically and in human terms.

But beyond all that, we have got to recognize that we cannot be what we're supposed to be if children are shot with reckless abandon in our streets, if children grow up without a future, and if people go around bemoaning it but don't

want to do anything about it. And the President of the United States and the United States Congress can only do so much. Some of this will have to be done community by community, neighborhood by neighborhood, family by family, block by block.

But we can do it. If you leave here tonight believing anything, I want you to believe our country is on the move again. I'm telling you, those leaders of those Asian countries were exhilarated when we passed that trade agreement because they thought we were going to turn away from the world and walk away. And they know now we're not. But I'll tell you something else: Everyone of them admitted that the opposition to NAFTA deserved to be honored because of the rampant insecurity of working people in every advanced country in the world. The story I had to tell here was the same story that I heard from Canada, from Australia, from New Zealand, increasingly true in all of Europe,

and even now coming to be true in Japan. We have got to find a way to reward people who work hard and who are competitive. And we have got to find a way to bring all of our people along.

This administration is pursuing that direction as vigorously as we know how. We are on the move. And we are going to get there if you in California, who have the largest stake in our future success, will make sure that in Washington the President has partners like Senator Dianne Feinstein.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9 p.m. in the Grand Ballroom at the Fairmont Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to William L. Brown, Jr., California State Assembly speaker; Clarence Clemmons, saxophonist; and Richard C. Blum, the Senator's husband.

Remarks at Our Lady Help of Christians School in Los Angeles *November 21, 1993*

Thank you so much. It's wonderful to see all of you here today. I want to thank everyone who has made my visit here so wonderful so far, especially all the people in the courtyard behind us who took me through "Christmas in other Lands," gave me something to eat from every land represented. I thank you, Cardinal Mahony, for being here. I thank you, Father Santillan, for the wonderful work that you and others do at this parish and at this wonderful school. I thank you, Gloria Molina, for being my friend and the national cochair of my campaign last year. And I want to thank all the members of the various elected groups who are here today, the State officials, the local officials who care about you and your future, for joining me here today.

There are three people I want to mention who aren't here today because they're back in Washington, and I hope the Cardinal will forgive them, but the Congress is actually meeting on Sunday, only because they're trying to be home for Thanksgiving. But the Members of Congress from this area, Xavier Becerra, Lucille Roybal-Allard, and Esteban Torres, all asked me to give

you their love and best wishes. I thank them for their support of our administration and for their support of you.

I started out this morning in Pasadena meeting with about two dozen people who lost their homes or whose family members lost their homes in the fire. And I got this interesting little button—I don't know if you can see it—it looks almost like a stone pin from where you are, but it's actually just a button that was burned up in the fire. And a man who saved two other homes but who lost his own, found 50 of these pins. And he and his wife had them on. And from a distance I said, where did you get those pins? And he told me what they were, and he gave me one. This is just a charred reminder of the courage and the heroism of the people of this area who struggled through those terrible fires. I thank them for what they did, and I hope that their decency and courage in an emergency will inspire all the rest of us to do better everyday of our lives. I wish all of you could have been there with me at the Presbyterian church in Pasadena today to see them.